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ABSTRACT

Designed to aid high school and college teachers in teaching the fundamentals of listening, this booklet includes sections on theory and on practice. The section on theory discusses the listening process and its importance, examines five purposes for listening (appreciative, discriminative, comprehensive, therapeutic, and critical), and tells how teachers can help students to improve their listening skills. The section on practice describes 38 exercises keyed to specific topics discussed in the first section. The exercises are designed to increase students' skills in such areas as listening for different purposes, concentrating on what is said, interpreting feedback, appreciating oral literature, giving and following directions, and applying nondirective listening in interpersonal communication. (GT)

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# Listening Instruction

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# Foreword

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system developed by the U.S. Office of Education and now sponsored by the National Institute of Education (NIE). It provides ready access to descriptions of exemplary programs, research and development efforts, and related information useful in developing more effective educational programs.

Through its network of specialized centers or clearinghouses, each of which is responsible for a particular educational area, ERIC acquires, evaluates, abstracts, and indexes current significant information and lists that information in its reference publications.

The ERIC system has already made available—through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service—much informative data, including all federally funded research reports since 1956. However, if the findings of specific educational research are to be intelligible to teachers and applicable to teaching, considerable bodies of data must be reevaluated, focused, translated, and molded into an essentially different context. Rather than resting at the point of making research reports readily accessible, NIE has directed the separate ERIC clearinghouses to commission from recognized authorities information analysis papers in specific areas.

In addition, as with all federal educational information efforts, ERIC has as one of its primary goals bridging the gap between educational theory and actual classroom practices. One method of achieving that goal is the development by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills (ERIC/RCS) of a series of sharply focused booklets based on concrete educational needs. Each booklet provides teachers with the best educational theory and/or research on a limited topic. It also presents descriptions of classroom activities which are related to the described theory and assists the teacher in putting this theory into practice.

This idea is not unique. Several educational journals and many commercial textbooks provide teachers with similar aids. The ERIC/RCS booklets are unusual in their sharp focus on an educational need and their blend of sound academic theory with tested classroom

practices. And they have been developed because of the increasing requests from teachers to provide this kind of service.

Topics for these booklets are recommended by the ERIC/RCS National Advisory Committee. Suggestions for topics to be considered by the Committee should be directed to the Clearinghouse.

Bernard O'Donnell
Director, ERIC/RCS

# 1 Theory

In this age of communication when both the transmission and the reception of aural stimuli are necessary for meaningful communication to occur, we too frequently hear the complaint that people are not listening. Parents are not listening to their children; children are not listening to their parents; employers are not listening to their employees; employees are not listening to their employers. From family members to U.N. delegates, the number of those who are told they are not listening is limitless. However, few notice this problem more frequently than those involved in the educational profession.

While the importance of effective listening is acknowledged, few of us have received formal instruction in listening. This paucity of instruction is evident at all levels of education. Even in teacher-training institutions, few students receive listening training or instruction in methods of teaching listening. At the elementary and secondary levels, often the only listening "instruction" students receive is commands to pay attention or to listen carefully or a list of do's and don't's to memorize for a written test. In many basic oral communication courses at the secondary and college levels, the focus is still on the transmission of messages; this focus has contributed to the neglect of the receptive aspect of the oral communication process.

Although listening instruction in our schools is currently receiving greater emphasis than ever before, it still remains the "orphan" of the language arts. There is a scarcity of readily available instructional materials containing real substance; many still assume that listening skills develop automatically or as by-products of instruction in other subjects; and there are only a few specialized listening courses in institutions of higher education. As a result of the neglect of listening training, both teachers and students find themselves inadequately prepared for a society that is shifting more and more from the eye and the printed page to the ear and the spoken word.

This booklet is designed to aid high school and college instructors in designing and teaching units or courses in the fundamentals of listening. The skills, behaviors, and attitudes developed and fostered in

these units or courses can be valuable to students and instructors in their daily lives both in and out of the classroom.

## What Is Listening?

Defining listening is difficult because it is a complex process involving four separate, but interrelated, components. A model of the listening process is given at the end of this section (see Figure 1). Instructors may find it helpful to use this model as they discuss the components of listening.

The first component is *receiving*, the physiological process of receiving aural and/or visual stimuli (words, voice cues, nonlinguistic sounds, nonverbal cues). Listening may be impaired by loss in auditory or visual acuity.

The second component, *attending*, refers to the focused perception of selected stimuli. At any moment, numerous stimuli in the immediate environment are vying for an individual's attention. Some of these stimuli are external, such as a speaker's words or a noise in the hall; others are internal, such as a personal noise or a distracting thought. There is a limit to the number of stimuli to which one can attend at any one time. However, there is no limit to the number of stimuli constantly competing for an individual's attention. If all stimuli seeking attention at a given instant were sent to the cortex, a neural overload would occur. Thus, it is necessary to constantly engage in the process of selecting only those stimuli to which one will attend. (See Exercise 1.)

Attending is not a passive process; it requires effort as well as desire. By concentrating attention on one stimulus instead of on the many aural stimuli with which he or she is bombarded at any given moment, an individual can focus more sharply upon the selected stimulus. Once a stimulus has been selected, it has the individual's attention; that is, he or she becomes aware of it and then further processes it. If an individual has a limited attention span, a questionable priority system upon which to base selection of aural stimuli, or a lack of motivation to concentrate, listening ability will be weakened. (See Exercises 2 and 3.)

Just as *hearing* (for example, "Didn't you hear me?") and *listening* so frequently are used erroneously as synonyms, *attending* (for example, "Pay attention!") and *listening* are often incorrectly equated. The listening process encompasses more than hearing and attending. People can hear and attend to a foreign language, but if they cannot assign meaning to what has been spoken, they have not engaged in the total listening process. Thus, we come to the third aspect of listening—assigning meaning.

*Assigning meaning* refers to the interpretation or understanding of the aural stimuli heard and attended to. Although the listener's goal is to attach meaning similar to that intended by the message sender, we must realize that assigning meaning is a very personal process. We do not know exactly how meaning is assigned, but some researchers suggest that it is done by mental categorization. Categories, developed as we acquire our language, are stored in the memory. After selecting an aural stimulus for attention, an individual searches through the thousands of categories and subcategories in his or her memory system to find the category into which the stimulus "fits" (where memories of other stimuli with a similar pattern are stored). Meaning cannot be assigned until a "match" has been made. Having made the "match," the individual then ascribes meaning to the stimulus from the category evoked; the stimulus assumes the meaning of the category. How categories are used can be illustrated in a simplified manner.

Generally, in oral communication one listens to combinations of words such as in the following sentence: "The inflated oval ball rolled." The word *ball* is a general category that has its own attributes. The words *the*, *inflated*, and *oval* are modifying names that evoke subcategories of a general category, *ball*. Meaning can not be assigned until the memory is searched and the category into which the stimulus "fits" is found, and the brain makes only one search for category assignment at a time. In this particular example, a single subcategory (the sum of the attributes of the four words) is evoked by the entire phrase *the inflated oval ball*; the meaning is then assigned: football. A second general category, *rolled*, is evoked by the action word. Complete meaning is then assigned to the aural sentence.

From this example, it can be seen that if one word (for example, *oval*) were missed by the listener, the wrong meaning (basketball, volleyball, or beach ball) would result from the incorrect categorization. However, if the listener does not have a category for a given stimulus (as in the case when one hears a new word or a strange sound), he or she can only guess at its meaning. The brain searches for the most probable match and guesses what the category might be like. Incorrect categorization is frequent because each person has a different category system. Because of a listener's narrow experiences, inadequate vocabulary, etc., his or her meaning of a category is frequently not the meaning intended by the message originator. Fortunately, category system errors are minimized as an individual becomes more experienced and knowledgeable. Listeners should be flexible in recategorizing stimuli so that they can assign more reliable meanings to the stimuli to which they selectively attend. (See Exercise 4.)

The process of assigning the meaning intended by the sender is more difficult when the message arouses strong emotions in the listener. Suppose, for example, that a sender laughingly boasts, "I was so drunk I don't even remember driving home." Also, suppose he or she (not knowing the listener's background) makes this boast to one who has recently lost a relative in a fatal car accident caused by a drunken driver. After receiving and attending to the ten words in the message, the listener then searches his or her memory until the categories and subcategories into which the aural stimuli fit are found. Due to past experiences and present feelings, the listener's assigned meaning (especially for the words *drunk* and *driving*) is definitely not the same as the meaning intended by the message originator. Thus, the assigning of meaning to words in a highly emotional context is an even more personal, complex process.

The last component of the listening process, *remembering*, refers to the storage of aural stimuli in the mind for the purpose of recalling them later. Actually, memory is probably involved in all aspects of listening—in holding sound while one is initially receiving and attending to aural and visual stimuli, in searching the memory and categorizing stimuli in order to assign meaning, and in gaining information to retain for future use.

Before we leave our description of listening, there are three questionable views that we must resolve. One view is that listening means agreement. Often we hear one say, "He just won't listen to anything I say"; the sender makes this statement because the listener does not agree with the sender's message content. This disagreement does not mean that the listener did not listen; he or she just did not agree. Listening does not necessarily mean agreement. A second mistaken view is that overtly responding (reacting, providing feedback) is a component of the listening process. Though providing feedback is important to (as well as an indispensable indication of) effective listening, it goes beyond the listening process. When the listener overtly responds, he or she is no longer the listener but becomes, instead, the sender in the communication process. (See Exercises 5, 6, and 7.) Lastly, it should be noted that the receiver and the sender of aural stimuli need not be present in a face-to-face situation for listening to occur. Thus, one can engage in the listening act by way of radio, telephone, and dictaphone as well as in a face-to-face setting. Research in nonverbal communication indicates, though, that visual cues aid in meaning assignment. Birdwhistell's research (1970) suggests that spoken words account for no more than 30 to 35 percent of all social interaction, while Mehrabian (1968) estimates that as much as 93 percent of the total meaning of a message may stem

from nonverbal cues. (Leathers, 1976, Chapter 1, offers an interesting discussion of the functions of nonverbal cues.)

The process of listening as we have described it might be depicted as a sequential process model (see Figure 1). The model accounts for the aspects we have considered as integral to the listening process. Please recognize that this is a model of the decoding function, not of the entire process of human communication. We are not depicting the encoding and transmitting functions in this particular model.

## How Important Is Listening?

One way to assess the importance of listening is to consider the amount of time people daily devote to it. Listening plays a significant role in an individual's life from infancy through adulthood. It is the first language skill that a child develops, and it is the most basic of the four major areas of language development: children listen before they speak, speak before they read, and read before they write (Lundsteen, 1971). A person who lacks proficiency in any one of these skills is handicapped in the

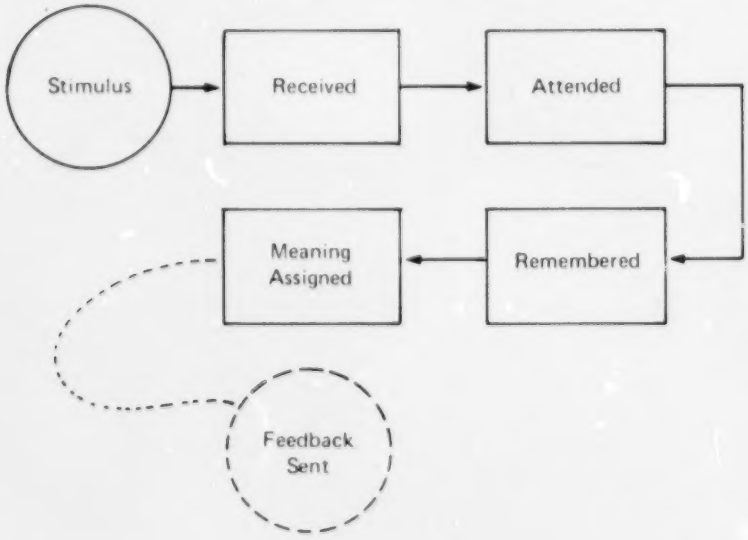


Fig. 1. A model of the listening process.

processes of learning and communicating, two activities necessary for productive participation in modern life.

Throughout all levels of educational development, listening is the main channel of classroom instruction. This can be seen readily from "Show and Tell" periods at the kindergarten level to two-hour lecture sessions at the graduate level. Results of studies measuring the amount of time students are expected to listen in the classroom indicate a range from 42 percent to 57.5 percent of their communication time (Bird, 1953; Markgraf, 1962; Wilt, 1950).

The importance of listening in learning and communicating is also apparent in our daily lives. Although estimates vary as to what proportions of our waking hours are spent in the four basic forms of verbal communication (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), researchers agree that listening consumes approximately 45 percent of our daily communication time (Rankin, 1930; Bird, 1953; Breiter, 1957). Hence, quantitatively speaking, listening (followed by speaking, reading and writing, in that order) is the most utilized form of verbal communication. (See Exercise 8.)

Another way of assessing the importance of listening is to examine the role listening plays in our lives. Modern technological advancements have made it easier for us to assemble and have brought us into closer contact with one another. Thus, the role of listening in interpersonal, group, and public communicative situations has become more significant in the mental, economic, spiritual, political, and social aspects of our lives. Whether the purpose of the assemblage is to settle differences among nations (such as the Paris peace talks), to investigate a country's internal affairs (such as the Senate Watergate hearings), to advance a common cause (such as pro-ERA rallies), to prepare for school integration (such as faculty-student interaction committees), to search for or strengthen social ties (such as singles' parties and block parties), or to provide entertainment (such as plays), listening plays a vital role in achieving the desired goal.

The importance of listening also has been emphasized by advances in the mass media. With the advent of radio, motion pictures, and television, we have come to rely more and more on the spoken word for information about local, state, national, and international affairs as well as for enjoyment. The mass media advancements, as well as the quickened pace of life, have aided in calling attention to the need for effective listening.

Still another way of determining the importance of listening is to consider the effects that listening has on us. The Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English has

stressed that people's "economic concepts, political ideals, and ethical standards are influenced, if not largely determined, by their listening." The commission has also emphasized that many of our attitudes, principles, and ideas are being increasingly "left to the tutelage of radio, [motion] pictures, and television" (Commission on the English Curriculum of the National Council of Teachers of English, 1952). The influence of the mass media on the listener has been studied by Katz (1957). Results of experimental studies have led him to hypothesize that any effects of the mass media on the general public normally operate through a "two-step flow of communication"; that is, ideas flow from the mass media to "opinion leaders" (friends, coworkers, family members, or any significant others) and from them to the rest of the community. Thus, personal contacts serve to influence individuals more than the mass media, although many of the ideas discussed among persons originate from the media.

How important is listening in contemporary society? It is the most frequently used language skill; it plays an integral part in our everyday lives; and, although there is little experimental evidence to document the effects of listening on our lives, it appears to have a profound effect on the formation of our attitudes, skills, behavioral patterns, and understanding. (See Exercise 9.)

## Why Do We Listen?

People listen for different purposes. They may listen for comprehension, for discernment, or simply for enjoyment. The listening experience will be made more meaningful and more satisfying if the listener sets definite goals and decides what kind of listening to engage in—appreciative, discriminative, comprehensive, therapeutic, or critical.

### *Appreciative Listening*

We listen for appreciation in order to enjoy or to gain a sensory impression from the material. Listening to music, to a speaker's language style, to a movie or stage production, to environmental sounds, or to a television presentation all represent forms of appreciative listening.

Listening for appreciation is a very individual thing. Our tastes and standards for what we appreciate vary widely. Thus, a comedian may be enjoyed by one person and disliked by another.

Awareness of the background and style of the material may provide a more meaningful appreciative listening experience. Specialists in

music appreciation suggest that understanding something of music may help one to better appreciate it. Thus, study of the composer, history, instruments, and style all may enhance appreciation of the piece. Likewise, art critics suggest that an understanding of the background and style of a painting or a sculpture may lead to greater appreciation.

Listening to a speaker or oral reader for appreciation may assist the listener in developing some basic skills in this type of listening: (1) listening to visualize; (2) listening for the speech rhythm; (3) listening for the speaker's style; (4) listening to interpret character from dialogue; (5) listening to recognize tone and mood; (6) listening to understand the effect of the speaker or reader's vocal qualities and physical action; and (7) understanding the effect of the audience on the listener's own responses. (See Exercises 10 and 11.)

*Discriminative Listening*

Discriminative listening refers to the distinguishing of the auditory or visual stimulus. Speech and hearing therapists, for example, work to distinguish speech sounds in order to identify disorders in clients. Musicians listen discriminately to musical tones. Parents learn to distinguish the basic needs of their infant children by discriminating different types of crying. Panhandlers are experts at visual discrimination in quickly sizing up an "easy mark" on the street. (See Exercises 12 and 13.)

Experience in discriminative listening can help a person to improve his or her discriminative ability. Practice in discriminating common environmental sounds can be a good first step. It is amazing how many sounds we may just tune out with little or no discrimination. Compare the sounds of an ambulance siren, a police car siren, and a fire truck siren in your neighborhood. Can you distinguish different birds? How about animals at the zoo? (See Exercise 14.)

Discrimination of verbal messages can be extensive. It is possible to develop a sensitivity to arguments and to language, to distinguish emotionally loaded words and arguments, to distinguish facts from opinions, and to discriminate inductive and deductive sequences. Such discriminations can serve a useful function for the listener who must then listen critically for the purpose of evaluating the message.

Discriminative listening includes developing a sensitivity to nonverbal communication. A person's vocal expression (paralanguage) can reveal emotional reactions. And physical action (kinesics) can serve as a supportive channel of communication.

The discriminative listener should be aware that, as we assign meaning to verbal and nonverbal cues, we have to apply our category system and, consequently, label the stimulus. Thus, a clenched fist gesture may lead us to categorize or label that as an angry response. Such a label, however, may stereotype the response and oversimplify or overgeneralize the category. Suggestions for the sexual interpretation of body language in popular books on nonverbal communication, for instance, can lead to stereotyped reactions which may not be the intended message at all. Discrimination of the vocal cues (paralanguage) can offer the listener clues to the speaker's emotional state and level of commitment to what he or she is saying. Persons who administer polygraph (lie detector) tests, for example, develop a tremendous ability to discriminate the nonverbal cues of the people they test, and they often can predict from their subjects' facial expressions and vocal stress what the polygraph chart will reveal. (See Exercises 15, 16, 17, and 18.)

*Comprehensive Listening*

Comprehensive listening is listening for the purpose of understanding a message. We listen to lectures, briefings, reports, conferences, oral papers, TV documentaries, film documentaries, etc., in order to comprehend the information being presented. Much of the educational process is based on comprehensive listening. Students must listen carefully to lectures and class discussions in order to understand and to retain an extensive amount of information. This oral communication of information extends to the work setting. Employees are expected to learn new skills and new procedures for their work through training programs which often utilize lecture and discussion methods for the presentation of the information. Effective comprehensive listening requires the listener to concentrate on the message strictly for understanding, not for a critical judgment of it.

Comprehensive listeners should strive to totally concentrate on the message being presented. They should set aside any judgments of the speaker, the message, or the language being used until the message is presented so that comprehension is as complete as possible. It may also be necessary to work on the retention of the information that has been received and understood. Ralph Nichols (1948) has stressed that listeners retain only about 25 percent of the information they receive. If the listener must recall the information (material for an exam, for instance) to use it later, then it is helpful for him or her to review it mentally until it is clear. Such a review for retention might be facilitated

by careful note taking, although it is difficult to correlate note taking per se to listening behavior. (See Exercises 19, 20, and 21.)

Nichols's pioneering research on comprehensive listening (1948) identified the importance of recognizing that listeners listen and think as much as four times faster than the normal conversational rate (125–180 words per minute) of the speaker. The listener, then, is tuning in and tuning out throughout the presentation. A good comprehensive listener will carefully tune back in and even provide some internal mental summaries or anticipate what the speaker is going to say next in order to aid his or her concentrated attention. (See Exercise 22.)

In comprehensive listening, we also ought to distinguish between factual information based on observable phenomena and inferential information based on interpretations of data. The careful listener will recognize what is presented as fact and what is presented as inference. A speaker might say, for instance, "It is thirty-two degrees outside"—a factual statement. If the speaker says, "It looks as if it's cold outside today," however, he or she is making an inference about the weather. Distinguishing fact from inference requires careful concentration throughout the presentation. The comprehensive listener, then, can understand the message information and work to retain it for future use. (See Exercise 23.)

### *Therapeutic Listening*

Therapeutic (or empathic) listening is a unique form of listening behavior. One generally held view of therapeutic listening suggests that the listener serves as a "sounding board," providing the speaker with an opportunity to talk through a problem to his or her own solution of it. Of course, a serious psychological problem should be referred to a qualified therapist. But many people just need someone to listen to them in order to get problems off their chests and see their own solutions more clearly.

Another generally held view is that a good therapeutic listener must be careful not to evaluate or judge what is being said. Instead, the therapeutic listener should listen comprehensively to the problem being discussed and provide only the necessary supportive feedback to keep the speaker going. Psychological counselors refer to this as nondirective listening and recommend verbal and nonverbal techniques such as nodding the head, saying "uh huh" and "yes," and referring to what the speaker has just said (for example, "You say you're concerned about your study habits?" or "What I'm hearing you say is you're upset about

your employer's manner of handling your work schedule").

Effective therapeutic listening requires a supportive communication climate. Jack Gibb's pioneering research on avoiding defensiveness (1961) highlighted this need for providing a climate in which speakers feel free to express themselves without fear of being attacked. According to Gibb, a supportive climate is free of defensive communication behaviors (evaluation, control, strategy, neutrality, superiority, and certainty); it is characterized by description, problem orientation, spontaneity, empathy, equality, and provisionalism. A supportive climate fosters openness and trust—two necessary components for building a meaningful relationship between a troubled speaker and a therapeutic listener. (See Exercises 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30.)

*Critical Listening*

While therapeutic listening requires that a listener not evaluate what is being said, the critical listener must evaluate the message in order to determine whether to accept or to reject the message. Thus, the critical listener should first comprehend the complete message and then form judgments about it.

In addition to careful comprehension of the message, the critical listener should establish clear criteria for judging the message. The criteria are especially important for the evaluation of any type of persuasive message—a campaign speech, a TV or radio ad, a speech of advocacy, a propaganda appeal, and so forth. Effective persuasive messages are built on the credibility (prestige, reputation, believability) of the source. Good persuasive speakers will try to emphasize their authority and trustworthiness as the source of the message in order to get listeners to believe in them and thus believe in their message. (See Exercise 31.)

Listeners respond emotionally to both the credibility of the speaker and the psychological appeals of the message. There is a wide range of psychological appeals that persuaders may select to gain the desired response. They may appeal to the listener's sense of achievement, adventure, affiliation, creativity, curiosity, dependence, endurance, fear, imitation, independence, loyalty, personal enjoyment, power, pride, reference, revulsion, saving, sexual attraction, or sympathy. (See Exercises 32 and 33.)

The psychological appeals of a persuasive message should support a plausible argument. A speaker may select a deductive argument which develops from logical necessity a major premise, minor premise, and conclusion. The syllogism is the typical deductive form:

Major premise: All listeners who improve their listening skills will be rewarded.

Minor premise: You are a listener who improves your listening skills.

Conclusion: Therefore, you are a listener who will be rewarded.

People usually don't communicate in formal syllogisms, however, because one or more of the premises are shared by both speaker and listener. We communicate deductively in enthymemes—deductive arguments built on unstated, shared premises or assumptions. Thus, it may not be necessary to spell out the major premise in the aforementioned listening improvement argument. The speaker and the listener may well understand—and agree—that there are rewards to improved listening skills, so the speaker can start with the minor premise and argue with the enthymeme, "If you improve your listening skills, you will be rewarded."

If the listener is perceived to be opposed to the point of view at the outset, the speaker may choose an inductive argument structure to argue from probability, using a series of specifics to draw a general conclusion. An inductive argument might be as follows:

You have a good attention span.

You comprehend the material.

You provide effective feedback.

You have a high level of motivation.

Therefore, you are a good listener.

If the speaker can start with points of agreement and move into the areas of controversy later in the inductive argument, the listener may be more disposed to accept the conclusion of the inductive argument.

The major flaw in inductive arguments is the use of too few specifics to draw the conclusions. A good critical listener should be alert to hasty generalizations. As listeners, we are frequently bombarded with hasty generalizations that overstate the case. Consider the speaker who argues:

> Teenagers today are going to rack and ruin. I'm concerned that today's kids are tripped out on drugs, hooked on booze, and dependent on cigarettes. Furthermore, they are living together in free sex and totally irresponsible for their own actions. Parents have given up, and teachers don't seem able to cope with this generation. I think, though, that something had better be done about this soon.

The critical listener should be aware of other factors which can interfere with substantial arguments. Listeners can be thrown off the

track by emotional language, particularly loaded words designed to get people to respond at an emotional level. Hate rhetoric aimed at denouncing a particular racial or ethnic group, for instance, can have this effect. Listeners are manipulated by loaded words to respond to the message as if they were responding to the object of the hate message itself.

The use of loaded words can point up yet another danger for critical listeners—their own biases and stereotypes. As we process aural stimuli through a category system, the categories can lead to stereotypes of a particular group or class. Consequently, labels can interfere with careful, rational judgment. The problems with intergenerational communication exemplify this difficulty. Youngsters tend to label and stereotype the elderly as "old" people. Such stereotypes are reinforced by television images of "dirty old men" on comedy shows and "little old ladies" who endorse denture aids and other geriatric products. (See Exercises 34, 35, 36, and 37.)

The critical listener, therefore, must be aware of the effects of the language, arguments, appeals, and credibility of the speaker on his or her understanding and subsequent evaluation of the message. To be an effective listener, one must first thoroughly understand the message and then form judgments about it, deciding whether to accept or reject it.

## How Can We Improve Listening Skills?

Regardless of the purpose for listening—appreciative, discriminative, comprehensive, therapeutic, or critical—the listener can take steps through self-awareness to improve his or her own listening skills.

The first step is that of motivation. The importance of listening and the importance of motivation in changing behavior are known. The listener who is motivated—who truly wants to become a more effective listener—is already well on the way to improved listening skills.

The motivated listener will set goals for the listening experience. It is helpful to make decisions as to what type of listening should be undertaken. The purposes ought to conform with the objectives of the speaker. It would be appropriate, for example, to select a comprehensive listening purpose if the speaker presents an information briefing, but it would be inappropriate to select a critical listening purpose if the speaker desires to discuss a personal problem.

The effective listener also will assume an active role in the process. Unfortunately, we have come to associate listening with a passive experience—sitting back and letting the communication just "happen." But the involved, active listener assumes an important role as a

communicator in the total communication process. Likewise, the active listener assumes a positive attitude about the listening experience itself. It is important to view listening as a positive, rewarding activity, not the negative "have to" experience that has come to be identified with the process. We tend to associate listening with negative messages: "Sit down and listen," "You're not listening to me," "Why don't you ever listen?" Too often, parents and teachers fail to reward children for good listening and instead emphasize punishment for not listening. This may indeed create in children a negative self-concept of their listening ability. For this reason, listening skills should be developed early in a child's life. Developing good listening habits with positive rewards for effective listening could help the child to grow with the skills and the positive self-concept important to effective listening.

Effective listeners will commit themselves to strengthening their skills in the listening process. They work to concentrate their attention on the speaker; they tune out distractions. They work to create a supportive climate in which speakers and listeners are free to communicate. They are careful to maintain emotional control so as not to project their own beliefs and attitudes into the messages of others. And effective listeners work at sending appropriate feedback to the speaker.

In summary, effective listeners understand what is currently known about the listening process; recognize the importance of listening; are personally motivated to become better listeners; are purposeful listeners who utilize skills relevant to each purpose; are active, involved listeners; have positive attitudes toward listening; concentrate their attention on the speaker; provide a supportive climate; have emotional control; and send appropriate feedback. Listeners at any age can develop these characteristics through awareness and practice. The more experience people have with the application of good listening skills, the more they should be comfortable with greater listening efficiency. (See Exercise 38 for long-term assignment.)

# 2 Practice

The exercises in this section are designed to assist in developing listening awareness and building effective listening skills. Instructors are encouraged to use the exercises as they cover with their students the Theory section. The number of each exercise corresponds with those given in the Theory section.

**Exercise 1: Who Said What?**

*Objective.* To provide students with the opportunity to use selective attention.

*Exercise.* Have three students with similar vocal quality, pitch, rate, volume, etc., sit by another student designated as the listener. One student should sit behind the listener, one to the listener's right, and one to the listener's left. The three students—discussing different topics—should speak to the listener simultaneously for three minutes. Afterward, the listener should record on paper what he or she actually comprehended from the one-way conversations. Repeat this exercise using two senders instead of three.

*Discussion.* Did the listener become frustrated? How could the class tell? Did the listener comprehend comments made by all three senders? Did the listener apply selective attention and listen to only one of the senders? Was it more difficult for the listener to listen to three senders than to two? In the students' daily lives, how many senders can they attend to at a given time? To how many can they give their full attention?

**Exercise 2: If I Had a Million Dollars**

*Objective.* To give students an opportunity to practice attentive listening by recalling items in a sequence.

*Exercise.* Have students sit in a circle. The first student begins by saying, "If I had a million dollars, I'd buy a sports car" (or whatever he or she wishes to say). The second student repeats what the first student

said and adds another item. The exercise progresses as each new student adds an item to the list after first repeating the previous students' items. No item can be chosen by more than one student.

*Discussion.* What was the noise level in the room? How many repetitions were made before a student broke the chain? When the chain was broken, whose item did the student forget? Was it most often the student immediately preceding him or her? Why? Were students more successful the second time the exercise was conducted? How did students behave as they were concentrating? How difficult is concentrating?

*Variations.* This exercise can be conducted by having the first student start in one of the following ways: "I'm going on a picnic, and I'm taking . . ."; "I'm going to California, and I'm taking . . ."; or "Over the holidays, I received . . . ."

**Exercise 3: I'm Trying**

*Objective.* To give students an opportunity to make a conscious effort to increase their attention spans.

*Exercise.* Have students deliberately try to concentrate on what is being said in the classes that are giving them the most difficulty. Have students keep a log of their attention habits. In this log, they are to list the times they started listening and the times they found themselves tuning out. They also are to list why they stopped listening and what they found themselves thinking about when they were tuned out. This log should be kept for five school days and then turned in to the teacher.

*Discussion.* What was the average length of the students' attention spans? Was it more difficult to pay attention in one class than it was in the others? What were the most common reasons for tuning out? How frequently did the same subject(s) recur in their thoughts or daydreams as they were tuned out? Did their attention spans lengthen as they continued doing this exercise? Could short attention spans be a probable cause of their not doing well in a class that requires a great deal of listening? How can the students increase their attention spans? (Were students honest with their instructor? Why or why not?)

**Exercise 4: What's a Funicu . . . ?**

*Objective.* To help students determine word meanings by contextual clues.

*Exercise.* Prepare at least one different statement for each student; each statement should include at least one word with which the students

would most likely be unfamiliar. An example of the type of statement to be used is the following: "In the animalistic, jungle-type atmosphere with which we inmates are surrounded, gentleness and tenderness are *construed* as weakness, so we *subjugate* our gentleness and tenderness and erect a protective *facade* in the form of our 'prison face'." As each statement is read (and it should be read only once), the listeners are to identify the unfamiliar word(s) and guess at its/their meaning(s). When a student is correct, he or she is to explain what led him or her to make the proper guess. When a student is wrong, another student should be given the chance to define the missed word. If the second student cannot correctly guess its meaning, he or she is to look it up in a dictionary and report its meaning to the class; at this time, the teacher should reread the statement in which the word is used.

*Discussion.* How do contextual clues help students to define unknown terms? Was it easier to define an unknown term when there was only one unknown term in a statement? Why? How does an inadequate vocabulary affect one's listening effectiveness? If listeners do not understand a word, how do they interpret the sender's message? What are some examples of verbal and/or nonverbal responses that listeners should use to let the sender know that they do not understand certain words?

**Exercise 5: Are You Sure?**

*Objective.* To make students more aware of the types of nonverbal feedback they may reveal to the sender.

*Exercise.* Assign students to bring in large (at least 8″ × 10″) pictures, neatly mounted on construction paper, of listeners giving positive, negative, and ambiguous nonverbal feedback. Each student will then show the class his or her picture(s).

*Discussion.* Which kind(s) of feedback does each picture show? Are some examples of feedback difficult to interpret? Why? How does ambiguous feedback interfere with effective communication? In what different ways is positive feedback shown? In what different ways is negative feedback shown? How would the student speakers react if their listeners responded in some of these ways? In how many of these ways have the students consciously responded?

*Variation.* Through videotaping, you might want to pan a camera to pick up examples of various types of feedback as a student presents a speech to the class.

**Exercise 6: Is It Clear?**

*Objective.* To illustrate for students how feedback can be interpreted in various ways.

*Exercise.* Select two students to come to the front of the room and face the class; they may sit down. Have one student read a slanted editorial from the school or local newspaper. The other student, the listener, is to respond nonverbally to the editorial.

*Discussion.* How did the class interpret the listener's feedback? What, specifically, did the listener do to lead to these interpretations? How did the listener truly feel about the message? Were interpretations correct? Could the listener have given more explicit and accurate feedback? How?

**Exercise 7: Mine Is Different**

*Objective.* To demonstrate to students that two-way verbal communication is more effective than one-way verbal communication.

*Exercise.* Ask for one volunteer to be the message sender. Give him or her a copy of three simple drawings, and have him or her mentally plan how to give directions to the students who will reproduce the drawings on their papers. Give each student two sheets of unlined 8½-by-11-inch paper. Have students divide their papers into thirds and draw lines where their folds are. They should use pencils with erasers for this exercise.

One at a time, the sender should accurately describe (verbally only) his or her three drawings. Drawings should be simple, such as the one in Figure 2. The students are to execute each drawing according to the sender's directions. Students cannot ask questions or look at others'

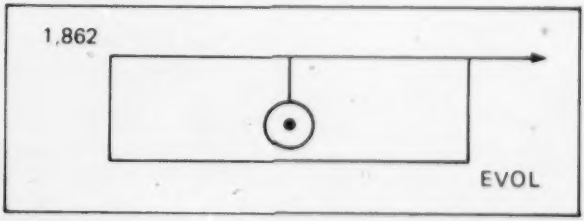


Fig. 2. A sample drawing to use for Exercise 7.

papers. After each drawing has been completed, students should place a *c* (for *correct*) by each drawing they think has been accurately drawn. The sender is then given a copy of three other simple drawings, and he or she again gives directions as the students draw. This time, however, students may ask questions to make sure they are accurately following directions; the sender (again without giving nonverbal directions) can orally answer their questions. Students are to place a *c* by each drawing they think they have accurately drawn. The sender is to show the class his or her drawings; students are to check their drawings for accuracy (size, proportion, positioning, etc.).

*Discussion.* How many of the drawings that students thought were accurately drawn actually were? Does one-way verbal communication (as exemplified in the directions for the first three drawings) or two-way communication (as exemplified in the directions for the second three drawings) take longer to present? Why? Which way of communicating is more accurate? Which is more frustrating to the sender? Which is more frustrating to the receivers? When in their daily lives do students participate as senders and/or as receivers in one-way communication? How important is feedback?

**Exercise 8: How Often Do I Listen?**

*Objective.* To enable students to analyze the amount of time they engage in verbal communication (speaking, writing, reading, and listening) during their waking hours.

*Exercise.* Ask students to maintain a listening log for a specified amount of time (three or four days). First, they are to construct daily time charts divided into fifteen-minute intervals. Using *S* (for speaking), *W* (for writing), *R* (for reading), *L* (for listening), and *N* (for nonverbal communication or no communication—playing basketball, eating, etc.), they are to code their communication time during each waking hour. They should use the code that represents the type of communication in which they engage the *majority* of each fifteen-minute interval. They are then to tabulate the following:

1. The total number of fifteen-minute intervals they were awake
2. The total number of fifteen-minute intervals they engaged in no (or nonverbal) communication
3. The total number of fifteen-minute intervals they engaged in *each* type of verbal communication: speaking, writing, reading, and listening

4. The total number of fifteen-minute intervals they engaged in verbal communication (a sum of the four totals calculated in 3.)
5. The percentage of waking hours they spent engaged in no (or nonverbal) communication, verbal communication, speaking, writing, reading, and listening

Finally, students are to compare their findings (calculated in item 5) with those of Paul T. Rankin, who conducted a landmark study in 1926 (see Rankin, 1930). Rankin's findings are as follows:

No (or nonverbal) communication ..... 30 percent
Verbal communication ..... 70 percent

Listening ..... 42.1 percent
Speaking ..... 31.9 percent
Reading ..... 15 percent
Writing ..... 11 percent

**Exercise 9: Who Uses It?**

*Objective.* To make students more aware of the importance of good listening in their planned or chosen vocations.

*Exercise.* Students will explore the importance of good listening in their planned or chosen profession/vocation. They will interview, in person or over the telephone, at least one person working in their field of interest. Before conducting the interview, each student should submit to you for your examination and comments a list of questions that he or she plans to ask. Among other questions, the list should include these: Specifically, what is your occupation? During a typical work day, what percentage of the day do you spend in verbally communicating with others? Rank the four means of verbal communication in which you engage (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) from the one you use most to the one you use the least. List specific situations in which you engage in listening. In your area of specialization, how important is listening? What specific listening skills does a person holding your position need to possess? Do you consider yourself a good listener? Why or why not? Does your company provide any direct listening training? If so, what kind of training?

After conducting the interview(s), students will then discuss their findings on paper. Each student is to submit two copies of the paper—one to be returned to the student and one to be kept by you.

*Discussion.* What professions were explored? Which means of verbal communication is engaged in the most? Which is engaged in the least? How important is listening in the various professions? In what specific situations is listening used? If two or more students explored the same profession, were their findings similar or different? What specific listening skills are needed by the various job holders? Which of these skills do the students need to develop more effectively? Does any company provide direct listening training? If so, what kind of training?

**Exercise 10: The Performance Listener**

*Objective.* To give students an appreciation for oral interpretation of literature.

*Exercise.* Invite a guest reader to present a short program of appropriate prose and or poetry readings. Prior to the performance, discuss with students the seven skills of appreciative listening and note levels of appreciation—sensory impression, enjoyment, or critical response. After the presentation, conduct a class discussion of the entire performance.

*Discussion.* What sensory impressions did the students get from the material? Did they enjoy the performance? Why or why not? What did the material say to them? What were their reactions to the reader and his or her techniques? How do the students' responses to the performance differ? What has each student learned about his or her own appreciative listening from this experience?

*Variation.* You might want to conduct similar appreciative listening discussions following other kinds of performances—musical concerts, plays, movies, TV dramas, radio productions, etc.

**Exercise 11: Can You Feel It in Your Mind?**

*Objective.* To illustrate for students how appreciative listening skills can be applied to oral literature.

*Exercise.* Review with the class the seven appreciative listening skills (see page 8). Read or play recordings of three poems (for example, "The Cloud" by Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Patterns" by Amy Lowell, and "Dream Boogie" by Langston Hughes), a short story (for example, "Romance" by William Saroyan), and a play (for example, *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen). Ask the class to note which of the seven appreciative listening skills are involved in each presentation. Have

them pay particular attention to the first three skills for the poems, skills four and five for the short story, and skills six and seven for the play.

*Discussion.* Which of the seven skills were involved in listening to the poems? Cite specific examples of each. Which of the seven skills were involved in listening to the short story? Cite specific examples of each. Which of the seven skills were involved in listening to the play? Cite specific examples of each. How did these seven skills help the listeners to appreciate oral literature?

**Exercise 12: Medal or Metal?**

*Objective.* To provide students with practice in auditory discrimination of words.

*Exercise.* Prepare for each student a list of twenty words that sound like other words and/or have tricky prefixes or suffixes. One list could consist of words such as the following: instinct, left, metal, pillow, outcry, entangle, shell, coast, distress, graft, condition, belief, filled, reaction, borough, chapter, apparent, resumption, present, and relevant. Each student should have a list, a blank sheet of paper, and a writing utensil. Pair students and have them sit back to back. Student A is designated as the sender, and student B is designated as the listener. In round one, the sender—stating each word only *once*—reads the list of words while the listener writes down what he or she hears. There is to be *no* feedback between the partners. Students are to look directly in front of them; they are not to turn their heads toward their partner. In round two, the listener becomes the sender, and the sender becomes the listener; the second list of words is then read. This exercise will continue for fifteen to twenty minutes with the students changing partners as often as possible. Before leaving each partner, each student should score him- or herself by checking the sender's list. After twenty minutes, students are to return to their classroom seats.

*Discussion.* Did the noise in the classroom prevent the students from concentrating? Did the noise interfere with the listener receiving the sender's message? Did the students' scores improve with each additional exercise? If so, why? Were poor scores partially attributable to the senders' speaking abilities (volume, pronunciation, enunciation, rate, etc.)? Were students better senders after they had been listeners? Why?

**Exercise 13: Who Is Who?**

*Objective.* To provide students with practice in auditory discrimination and analysis of voice quality.

*Exercise.* Have students record their voices on tape for thirty seconds; they are not to identify themselves through content in any way. Instruct some to use their natural voices and others to try to disguise their voices. Play the tape for the class, and have them identify each voice.

*Discussion.* How many students were correctly identified? What vocal cues led to correct identification? Was it easier to identify students who used their natural voices or ones who disguised their voices? Why?

**Exercise 14: A Fog Horn??**

*Objective.* To provide students with practice in auditory discrimination of everyday sounds.

*Exercise.* Put together a listening tape of everyday sounds that would be familiar to virtually all students from either personal experience or from some medium such as TV. The tape should include sounds such as the following: telephone busy signal, door buzzer, Ping-Pong game, lawn mower, zipper, vacuum cleaner, turkey, car skidding, baby crying, bottle opening, ballpoint pen clicking, bowling, knocking on a door, writing on chalkboard, finger snapping, car door closing, bacon frying, venetian blinds closing, etc. These sounds can be taken from records of sound effects and or can be "homemade." Play the tape, and have students identify the sounds by listing them on paper.

*Discussion.* How many sounds were identified? Were common sounds recognized more frequently than the less common sounds?

**Exercise 15: Oh!**

*Objective.* To show students how a speaker's use of paralanguage (vocal characteristics and nonverbal vocalizations) can affect a listener's assignment of meaning.

*Exercise.* Have students list all vocal characteristics they can think of (pitch, volume, vocal quality, vocal variety, accents, impediments, etc.); write these on the chalkboard. Also, have students list nonverbal vocalizations or utterances (audible yawns, moans, belching, whistling, clucking, panting, kissing, *um*'s and *ah*'s, etc.); list these on the chalkboard. Have students sit in a circle and close their eyes. Each student is to say "oh" in a way as to express a different emotion. Students are to interpret the meaning of each "oh" (surprise, disappointment, shyness, delight, sexual pleasure, frustration, hatred, love, fear, joy, sadness, etc.).

*Discussion.* Why did the teacher have the students close their eyes? How frequently did listeners derive the meaning intended by the sender?

How many different emotions were communicated through "oh"? How does the speaker's tone of voice affect communication?

**Exercise 16: How Would Archie Say It?**

*Objective.* To make students aware of how paralanguage adds to their understanding of a dramatic episode.

*Exercise.* Have the student silently read the text of a dramatic episode from a television program. Then play a five- to ten-minute recording of the episode. (Records of many television shows are available.)

*Discussion.* Specifically, how were the emotions, attitudes, and moods revealed in paralanguage? Did the students gain a deeper understanding of the characters' feelings by reading or by listening to the dramatic episode? How were subtle meanings expressed vocally?

**Exercise 17: Seeing Is Believing**

*Objective.* To enable students to see the impact of visual cues on listening skills.

*Exercise.* Show the students a dramatic film or videotape with the sound turned off. Discuss what students perceived to be the plot or situation and what visual cues enabled them to arrive at their interpretations. Then replay the material with the sound on so that students can hear as well as see the material. Compare their reactions to the first presentation with their reactions to the second presentation.

*Discussion.* What visual cues helped the students to interpret the material without the sound? How accurate were their interpretations after they had heard this material the second time? What does this suggest about the communication? How can students become more sensitive to the visual cues of communication?

**Exercise 18: What Does the Voice Say?**

*Objective.* To aid students in understanding how a speaker's nonverbal vocal cues affect a listener's assignment of meaning.

*Exercise.* Discuss how meaning can be derived from nonverbal cues in the voice. Consider voice quality, rate, pitch, amount of pausing or fluency, volume, vocal variety, laughter, audible moans or yawns, verbal pauses (*um*'s and *ah*'s), and so on. Then have students listen to a news commentator, an interview, or a live or recorded radio dramatization. An excellent choice of a radio dramatization is the 1938 "Mercury

Theater of the Air" broadcast of H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds*, narrated by Orson Welles.

*Discussion.* What nonverbal vocal elements did the students notice in the speaker's voice? What meanings did they derive from these nonverbal cues? Why were these interpretations made? How accurate do they think these interpretations are? Are there other possible interpretations? Did students listen to content, or did they concentrate on the speaker's delivery? How does concentration on nonverbal cues affect listening efficiency?

**Exercise 19: Neither Too Narrow nor Too Broad**

*Objective.* To provide students with experience in listening for main ideas.

*Exercise.* Read to the students several short speeches, each approximately three minutes in length. Students are to listen carefully for the main idea of each speech. (They may listen and then make notes, take notes while they listen, or not take notes at all.) Then distribute to the class mimeographed papers listing five possible choices of the main idea for each speech. Have students mark the main idea they think was expressed in each speech. Check the answers and discuss each main idea.

*Discussion.* In a speech, where is the main idea? Where do listeners find clues as to what the main idea of a speech is? Are main ideas always directly expressed? Should they be? What tends to be the characteristic language in which main ideas are usually expressed? How does knowledge of organizational patterns, transitional language, and the speaker's use of recapitulation aid the audience in listening for main ideas? Were some of the main ideas stated by students too narrow to encompass the whole speech? Were some of the stated main ideas too broad? (Did they include more than was in the speech?) Why should listeners listen for main ideas?

*Variation.* Do the same exercise, but read longer speeches.

*Variation.* Present tapes of speeches.

*Variation.* Instead of giving students a choice from which to select each main idea, have them state the main idea in writing.

**Exercise 20: Did You Forget Something?**

*Objective.* To demonstrate to students that accurately giving and following directions is a difficult task.

*Exercise.* Designate several students as speakers and several students as listeners. Each speaker prepares an explicit, step-by-step list of

directions for completing some simple task such as opening a new book, raising an umbrella, putting on a coat, sharpening a pencil, opening a locked closet door, etc. Pair a speaker with a listener. One at a time, each listener should follow the speaker's directions to the word in front of the class. The speaker cannot add information that he or she does not have written down; the listener can do only what he or she has been told to do and cannot communicate with the speaker.

*Discussion.* Were the directions complete? Was this a frustrating experience? For whom? If the task was not completed, whose fault was it? Why was this a difficult experience? From this exercise, what have the students learned about giving and following directions that will help them in their everyday lives?

**Exercise 21: Where's a Park Bench?**

*Objective.* To demonstrate to students how a message changes as it is passed from one listener to another.

*Exercise.* Ask five students to volunteer for an experiment. Send four of them out of the room. Use an opaque projector to project a fairly involved cartoon on the screen so that the class can see it. Have the volunteer who remained in the room carefully study the cartoon; soon he or she will have to describe the cartoon in detail to one of the other volunteers. After two minutes, have the student turn away from the cartoon. Call in one of the other volunteers and have the first volunteer describe the cartoon to one of the volunteers who has not seen the cartoon. Tell the volunteer to listen carefully since he or she, too, will have to repeat the list of details to the next volunteer who will be called in. Warn the class to refrain from laughing or making unnecessary noise since they will be viewing the cartoon on the screen and will be amused to hear the changes made as the descriptions are transmitted from volunteer to volunteer. When the last volunteer has heard the details, have him or her go to the chalkboard and make a simple drawing of what he or she understands the cartoon to look like.

*Discussion.* What happened to the original message as it went from person to person? Where were details omitted or added? In order to understand the message, what did listeners rely on more often—verbal communication or nonverbal communication?

**Exercise 22: Make It Fast**

*Objective.* To give students intensive practice in listening to rapid and difficult material, thereby increasing their ability to understand it.

*Exercise.* Have students listen for ten minutes to a compressed speech

tape containing difficult subject matter. After listening to the tape, each student should note on paper important ideas and so on. Discuss the material with the students and collect their notes in order to ascertain the progress of each student. Repeat the exercise for another ten minutes, this time covering a different subject area. If possible, gradually increase the speed and or length of the compressed speech tapes.

*Discussion.* What difficulties did students have in tuning in to the rapid rate? Once they had tuned in, could they comprehend the message? Can this practice help students in listening at normal conversation rate? How? Since the average speaker does not speak at this rapid rate, how can listeners utilize their spare time in a productive manner?

**Exercise 23: It Is a Fact, or Is It?**

*Objective.* To aid students in understanding the difference between fact and opinion.

*Exercise.* Read statements that are clearly either fact or opinion (such as "The Orioles beat the Yankees on August 13, 1978" and "The Orioles are a much better team than the Yankees"). Have the students write *F* or *O* on their papers after you have read each statement. Discuss the statements and define *fact* and *opinion*. Then have the class come up with a list of special interest groups (religious, economic, racial, political, sexual, professional, etc.). The students should read designated articles from periodicals such as *Ms.* or *Ebony* that express the opinions of different special interest groups. Have the students select statements of fact and opinion from each article and present them to the class. When an opinion is read, ask if anyone can explain why the opinion is held by that group. Next, have students form groups of two or three, and designate each group as a specific special interest group. Assign one topic (such as the problems of the American school system) to all groups, and have each group present an opinion about the topic from the viewpoint of the group it represents.

*Discussion.* Did each group present an opinion, or did some present facts? Why did each group have the opinion that it did? How do our special interests affect our views?

**Exercise 24: I Know How You Feel**

*Objective.* To give students the opportunity to listen to another person with understanding.

*Exercise.* All students are to pair off and discuss a topic on which they

disagree (abortion, capital punishment, the ERA, teenage marriages, premarital sex, a "woman's place," etc.). Student A, the speaker, begins by speaking for one minute about his or her views on the topic. Student B, the listener, must then paraphrase (without evaluation or interpretation) A's views to be sure that he or she understands how A feels. If there is some misunderstanding, A makes the correction. B then expresses his or her views for one minute, and A paraphrases B's statements to B's satisfaction. The interaction continues until each partner has fully expressed views on the topic and each partner feels that he or she has been understood by the other person. Students are to return to their classroom seats.

*Discussion.* Did the process enable the listener to withhold a tendency to evaluate? Why? Did this process enable each participant to step into the other's shoes and identify his or her feelings? How? How often were there misunderstandings? Did the interaction ever become heated? Why does this process seem to take so long to carry out? How did each student feel at the end of the interaction? Was each student's emotional state as heightened as it usually is when one discusses a topic with a person with whom one disagrees? In what ways could listening with understanding improve the students' everyday lives?

**Exercise 25: What Is a Good Wife?**

*Objective.* To provide students with the opportunity to listen with understanding in groups.

*Exercise.* This exercise is to follow Exercise 24. Have students form groups of four to six members. Each group is to reach a consensus on what six characteristics are necessary in a good wife, husband, girlfriend, boyfriend, teacher, *or* parent. (Either the class or instructor should decide on a common topic of discussion before the exercise is begun.) Group members must agree on *only* six characteristics. When the discussion becomes heated (and it most likely will), ask each member of the group to paraphrase the previous speaker's message to the speaker's satisfaction before stating his or her own views. Have a student in each group list on paper the group's six characteristics. Then students are to return to their classroom seats.

*Discussion.* Did each group reach a consensus? What characteristics were chosen? Did the discussion ever become heated? Why? Did students have difficulty in listening to others? Why? Did students have difficulty forming their own thoughts and listening at the same time? Did students forget what they were going to say? Did students rehearse their responses? When one student's remarks were paraphrased by another,

was the message stated in an abbreviated form? Did listeners make any judgments when they were repeating what they had heard?

**Exercise 26: But My Problem Is More Important**

*Objective.* To make students more sensitive to the need to listen with understanding.

*Exercise.* Divide students into groups of four or five. Each group member is to share a personal problem that he or she genuinely wants to solve; examples of personal problems might be curfew time, a grade in a certain class, telephone restrictions, unemployment, or playing time on a sports team. Each member should try to keep the discussion focused on his or her own problem; whenever one group member shares a problem and asks for help, other group members should turn that problem around to relate it to their own problems.

*Discussion.* Was real communication taking place during this exercise? Why? For real communication to occur, what behaviors are necessary? How did students feel while their problems were being ignored? How did they feel as they ignored others' problems? Have students ever been involved in this type of "communication" in their daily lives?

**Exercise 27: Who's on the Defensive?**

*Objective.* To illustrate for students how different types of responses are used when one responds to another's problem(s).

*Exercise.* Create three situations that deal with individual personal problems and that would seem relevant to your class. Here are four examples:

1. Steve no longer wants to go steady with me now that he's going to college. He says going steady won't be fair to me since he won't have much time to be with me; he has to work from four to six hours a day to pay for his schooling, and he knows he'll have to "buckle down" to study so he'll do well in his courses. He knows I'll want to have fun during my senior year (as he and I did last year during his senior year), and he says that his not having time to spend with me will prevent me from having a good time if we continue to go steady. He's just all talk. I know he's just "outgrown" me and wants to break off completely!
2. Man, I'm sick and tired of school. I hate it, and I'm going to quit—just quit. For the last eleven years, I've gone through the same old

stuff, day after day. Where does it get you? Nowhere. Sure don't help you get along in the world. I'm quitting.

3. I wish my parents would let go of me! They just keep hanging on. I want to go away to school so that I can "cut the strings" and be on my own. I want my independence! My parents say that they can't afford to pay out-of-state tuition. It only costs $500 more a semester in Ohio than it costs to go to school here. They can afford it; they just don't want to face the fact that their only "child" is no longer a child!

4. That teacher is impossible! I wrote the best term paper that I've ever written, and do you know what grade that ——— gave me? He gave me a C. I spent a month writing that paper. I hardly did anything else that whole month. There was not one grammatical or mechanical error in the whole paper—not one red mark! His only comment was, "You need to develop your main ideas with more supporting material." I had an example for every single, solitary main idea! I had to make at least a B on that paper in order to get an A in the course. And I really need that A to make up for the D I'm getting in advanced biology. If I don't make the honor roll, I won't be able to keep my insurance rates down. Then my parents will say, "Sorry, son, but you know the conditions for using the car." I can hear it now. No wheels just because of that teacher!

Read these situations to the class; after you have read each situation, have the students write out how they would respond to a friend who was discussing that problem with them. Have students then form groups of three and share their responses. Each group is to decide which response for each situation would be most helpful to the person with the problem. One person in each group should write down the group's chosen responses for each of the three situations. All group members should then return to their classroom seats. The instructor should review with students Jack Gibb's defensive and supportive communication behaviors before leading a discussion on the chosen responses.

*Discussion.* What kinds of responses did the groups choose? Which responses were defensive (denoting evaluation, control, strategy, neutrality, superiority, or certainty)? Which responses were supportive (denoting description, problem orientation, spontaneity, empathy, equality, or provisionalism)? Which of these types of responses would help the individual with a problem? Which would make it more difficult for the person to work out a solution? How helpful are each of these responses in the students' daily lives? Which type do the students hear the most? Which type do they use the most? Are there other ways of responding to problems?

**Exercise 28: Ummms**

*Objective.* To make students aware of the need for nondirective listening in a supportive communication climate.

*Exercise.* This exercise is to follow Exercise 27. Review with students nondirective listening techniques. Reread each of the three situations used in Exercise 27. After you have read each situation, have the students write out how they would use nondirective listening techniques and supportive communication behaviors to respond to a friend who has shared one of the three problems. Students are to form groups of three and share their responses through role-playing; they are to practice nondirective listening by empathizing with the speaker. All group members should then return to their classroom seats. In front of the class, each group should then role-play nondirective listening in one of the three situations.

*Discussion.* Were any of the defensive behaviors used? Which ones? Who was faced with the responsibility of solving the problem? What were some lead-in phrases that the listeners used? Which of the following were used most frequently: silence, restatement, repetition through questioning, paraphrasing, clarifying, nonverbal encouragements to continue (such as a nod of the head), verbalized "Ummms"? Were any other nonverbal techniques used? Were silences uncomfortable or helpful? Was a supportive climate provided and maintained? Were warmth, genuineness, and empathy expressed? How? Did the speaker explore alternatives to his or her problem?

**Exercise 29: What Should I Do?**

*Objective.* To provide students with an opportunity to apply nondirective listening in interpersonal communication.

*Exercise.* Students are to form pairs. Each person is to share a real, personal problem (big or small) with his or her partner. Each is to practice nondirective listening while the other is sharing his or her problem. Students are to return to their seats when they are finished.

*Discussion.* What nondirective listening skills were used? If the problem was a serious one, did the receiver treat it seriously? Or did he or she treat it lightly? What did he or she do to lead the sender to this conclusion? How did the senders feel during the exercise? How did the receivers feel? Was the exercise realistic, or was it viewed merely as an exercise? Was each student satisfied with the outcome of the communicative interaction? Why or why not? How can nondirective listening help the students in their daily lives?

**Exercise 30: Remember Rogers?**

*Objective.* To demonstrate to students the applicability of nondirective listening.

*Exercise.* Select one person to role-play a student doing poorly in school because of various personal problems (such as a broken home, long working hours to help provide for a large family, poor living conditions, etc.). Send three other students out of the room; they will be role-playing three instructors who are concerned about the "student" 's low grades in their respective classes. Privately instruct the "student" to *not* respond to the "instructors" unless they use nondirective listening techniques. Bring in one of the "instructors," and tape the interaction between the "student" and the "instructor." Repeat the same procedure with the other two "instructors."

*Discussion.* Was there any uncomfortable silence? Why? Did the class understand why the "student" did not respond at times? Did the "instructors" discover why the "student" did not respond at times? If so, what did they do to encourage the "student" to respond? What nondirective listening skills were used? How successful was each "instructor" in applying nondirective listening skills? (Use the tapes to aid in the discussion.)

**Exercise 31: Who's Your Friend?**

*Objective.* To help students discover how the dimensions of source credibility affect others.

*Exercise.* Have each student conduct a three-phased experiment outside of class. Each student is to introduce an acquaintance (who is aware of the experiment and who will assume the desired divergent roles) to two different groups of the student's friends. (This experiment will be more meaningful if the groups are faced with some problem and need advice that the acquaintance could offer.) Prior to the introductions in phase one, the student is to tell one group that the acquaintance they will soon meet is a competent, intelligent person; the student is to tell the other group that the acquaintance is an incompetent, unlearned person. Introductions and conversations are then to be conducted. The student will next proceed with phases two and three of the experiment using either different acquaintances or different groups of friends. In these two phases the student is to convey to the groups different ideas of the attractiveness, dynamism, and trustworthiness of the acquaintance. During each phase, the student is to talk with his or her friends after the acquaintance has departed. Each student is to report to the class the friends' reactions to the acquaintances.

*Discussion.* What differences in the acquaintances' acceptance did the students observe while the acquaintances and friends were together? How did the friends' perceptions of the acquaintances affect the ways in which they related to the acquaintances? What were the friends' reactions/comments after the acquaintances had departed? What references were made to the dimensions of source credibility? Was one dimension commented on more frequently than the others? Which one? Were other possible dimensions of source credibility mentioned? How does source credibility affect communicative relationships?

**Exercise 32: Meow—Fear**

*Objective.* To make students aware of the impact that certain sounds have on their emotions.

*Exercise.* Play four tapes of sounds to the students. Tape I should contain inanimate sounds (church bells, telephone ring, door chimes, sirens, thunder, etc.); Tape II should have animal sounds (dog barking, cow mooing, cat meowing, rooster crowing, etc.); Tape III, musical sounds (symphonic, jazz, rock, operatic, disco, etc.); and Tape IV, human sounds (cough, sneeze, laughter, crying, hiccup, ssssh, scream, etc.). Many of these sounds can be taken from records of sound effects. As the tapes are being played, have each student write down what they associate with each sound. These associations should either be an emotion (sadness, happiness, anger, etc.) or a recollection (such as a time, place, season, person, etc.). Make it clear to the students that they are not to identify the sound; they are merely to state in one or two words what it brings to mind.

*Discussion.* What did the students associate with each sound? Why did they have such reactions? Why are associations/reactions so different among the students? How can students' feelings affect their listening?

**Exercise 33: Write Your Own Caption**

*Objective.* To give students the opportunity to create psychological appeals and to identify the appeals created by others.

*Exercise.* Distribute to each student a captionless picture. Excellent pictures for this exercise can be found in Ann Christine Heintz's *Persuasion* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1970). Have each student write a caption containing at least one psychological appeal that could appropriately accompany his or her picture. Without showing the pictures, students are to read their captions to the class. Class members

are to identify the types of psychological appeals used by each presenter; pictures can then be displayed.

*Discussion.* What specific psychological appeals were used? Were some types of appeals used more frequently than other types? What specific elements (word choice, relevancy, identification, etc.) make the captions emotionally appealing?

*Variation.* Students can locate their own pictures rather than have the teacher distribute them.

*Variation.* Divide students into groups. Distribute one picture to each group. The group can compose one caption; or group members can each compose a caption and then compare the psychological appeals used.

**Exercise 34: Logical Fallacies Can Get You**

*Objective.* To help students identify logical fallacies and understand more fully the validity of arguments.

*Exercise.* Provide students with a list of logical fallacies to match with examples of logical fallacies. You may wish to make your own on sets of cards, or you may wish to use for this purpose the commercial game *Propaganda* (available from Wff 'N Proof Learning Games Associates, 1490 S. Boulevard, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104). John A. Jones, "A Fallacy Game for Students in the Basic Course," *Speech Teacher* 22 (November 1973): 342–44, details a strategy for developing your own game.

*Discussion.* What logical fallacies are most prevalent in communication? How can listeners become more alert to the fallacies they may be receiving?

*Variation.* Ask students to bring in examples of fallacies from actual communications (letters to the editor, television commentaries or commercials, speeches, etc.).

**Exercise 35: A Word Is Just a Word**

*Objective.* To make students aware of loaded words or phrases that interfere with their listening effectiveness.

*Exercise.* Have students list words and phrases that trigger a surge of emotion within them. Have them read their words and phrases (or you can collect and compile their lists and distribute the composite list to the class).

*Discussion.* Is there a variety of words and phrases? Are there any

similarities among the words and phrases? Can they be categorized under a few headings (for example, racial slurs, obscenities, parental criticisms, etc.)? Why do certain words arouse personal antagonism in so many people? Why do these words and phrases affect the listeners as they do? How do they affect students' listening efficiency? What can listeners do to help moderate their reactions to emotion-laden words and phrases?

**Exercise 36: Are They In.'ividuals?**

*Objective.* To help students be more aware of their personal biases and superficial judgments that affect their listening efficiency and to help them combat labeling, categorizing, generalizing, and/or stereotyping speakers based on their nonverbal characteristics.

*Exercise.* Divide students into groups of three or four. Each group is assigned one of the following categories: age, sex, race, complexion, makeup, hair length and style, clothes, physique, and objects (items worn or carried such as glasses, jewelry, ski patch, school letter, etc.). Groups should discuss stereotypes associated with their assigned categories, taking into consideration the kinds of impressions listeners form before the speaker even begins to speak; for example, a stereotype of a male with long, shaggy, unkempt hair may be that he is a radical, liberal, rebellious drug user, while a stereotype of a girl with teased hair and lots of makeup may be that she is cheap and uneducated. Each group is to then report to the class those stereotypes or biases inherent in the nonverbal characteristics of the speaker.

*Discussion.* Why do people categorize, label, generalize, and/or stereotype others? How often do the students make judgments about other individuals based on preconceived attitudes? How often are the students confronted with stereotypes by friends, family, school, church, and the media? What are the damaging effects of superficial judgments on the part of the listener? How can preconceived attitudes based on the nonverbal characteristics of an individual speaker distort or block what listeners hear? Do preconceived attitudes toward a speaker ever serve as alibis for the listeners' not listening? How can students combat the tendency to stereotype? In what ways will students be more efficient listeners if they refrain from criticizing a speaker's nonverbal characteristics?

*Variation.* Have each student bring to class a large, mounted magazine picture of a person (or group) who gives a stereotyped impression simply by the way he or she looks or by what he or she is carrying. Have the students show and discuss the pictures.

**Exercise 37: It's Only a Label**

*Objective.* To help students become more sensitive to their personal reactions to people who are "labeled" as well as to their feelings at being "labeled."

*Exercise.* On sticky labels, write such descriptions as: shirtless, long-haired, dirty "freak"; uniformed police officer with short hair and ruddy complexion; extremely fat and greasy middle-aged man; amputee in a wheelchair; severe stutterer; twenty-four-year-old gum-chewing girl with false eyelashes, lots of makeup, teased hair, low-cut blouse, and miniskirt; super jock; twenty-year-old black man with a black beret, huge muscles, four-inch Afro haircut, open shirt with skin-tight pants, and a "Black Power" button on his shirt; transsexual who is now female; and macho-man. Divide students into groups of six to ten. Without the students seeing their labels, adhere them to their foreheads. (Each groups may have the same six to ten labels.) In complete silence students are to mingle with their group for three to five minutes. Following the period of silence, students are to discuss an issue (such as the quality of television shows and films, the inflated salaries of sports stars, etc.) for five to ten minutes. Without directly telling an individual what his or her label is, group members are to nonverbally and verbally treat one another as they would if each member were stereotyped as his or her label designates. Without removing their labels, students are to return to their classroom seats.

*Discussion.* From the other students' reactions, who did each student think he or she was? What nonverbal clues regarding his or her identity did each student receive from others? What verbal clues did he or she receive? How did others' reactions make each student feel? How did this exercise develop empathy and sensitivity? (After the discussion is completed, students may remove their labels.)

*Variation.* An extension of this exercise would be to have each student create his or her own "label" on a button and wear the button for one week.

**Exercise 38: A Listening Journal**

*Objective.* To enable students to analyze their own listening behavior and develop strategies for self-improvement.

*Exercise.* Ask students to maintain a listening journal for a specified length of time (one week, one month, entire semester). The journal should include the following:

1. Initial objectives for self-improvement
2. Daily entries which
   a. identify that type of listening
   b. describe briefly the basic listening experience
   c. assess what the student learned about his or her listening from the experience
3. A one-day listening log which details with brief descriptors every listening experience encountered through the day
4. A summary analysis in which students determine how they did (or did not) accomplish their initial objectives and what they intend to do to continue improving their listening behaviors

Instead of discussion questions, sample entries from actual student journals are given below.

[Introduction]

The process of listening has always fascinated me. It is so much a part of life, yet it receives so little attention. We are often told that we don't listen, and we know we don't. Listening requires effort—more effort than merely hearing—and most of us would rather not make the effort.

If we were inclined to become better listeners, how would we go about improving our listening? I feel that awareness is the first step—being aware of what our shortcomings are as listeners and being aware of what is involved in the listening process.

[Personal Objectives]

To fully analyze my listening abilities and disabilities

To develop the ability to habitually assume a listening attitude

To develop the ability to set goals and improve skills in different listening situations

To develop the ability to organize what is being said (main ideas, important details, and sequences) in order to facilitate the recall of the message

To develop the ability to keep an open mind even though I dislike the speaker or disagree with his or her philosophy or position

To develop the ability to stop what I am doing and give my full attention to others when they are speaking to me (particularly my family)

To develop the ability to concentrate fully on what others are saying without letting my mind wander

To develop the ability to reserve judgment of a speaker and his or her message until I have listened to what he or she has to say

To develop the responsibility of providing appropriate feedback to the speaker, so that he or she will know if and how the message is being received

To develop the ability to listen to a speaker in spite of a poor delivery

To develop the ability to listen to material that is dull and uninteresting to me

To develop the ability to make inferences and draw conclusions

[Daily Entries]

Type of Listening: Therapeutic

Place: In my recreation room

Situation: A friend came over to talk about her problems

Comments: At first I was listening only superficially because I was busy doing other things. After a while, however, she got all of my attention, and I really became involved in the conversation. I tried to listen carefully to everything that was being said so I could help her solve her own problem. I think I managed to listen with empathy, but my friend really didn't come up with much of a solution to her problem today.

Type of Listening: Comprehensive

Place: In class at school

Situation: Listening to a forty-five-minute lecture on equations

Comments: After forty minutes, I felt saturated with facts and figures. I tried to concentrate, but I couldn't comprehend any more of the teacher's sample problems. I'll have to review the material in the book before I come back to school tomorrow.

Type of Listening: Appreciative

Place: At a school play

Situation: Production of *Vanities* at school

Comments: I was able to sit back and enjoy the production because I had been told about it in speech class and was prepared to appreciate the comment that the playwright made about society. Some people in the audience were upset about the "obscene language" (which is ridiculous), and their outrage interfered with the appreciation of the impact of the production. It was well presented, however, and I enjoy all of the Drama Club's work.

[Summary Analysis]

Keeping a listening journal has been surprisingly revealing. I am astonished at what I have found out about my listening habits.

I believe my most successful listening is in the area of therapeutic listening. I judge my success by the number of friends who come back again and again to talk over problems or concerns with me. I think this is the most important area of listening, and I have worked hard on the improvement of my therapeutic listening skills. Good listeners are invaluable and so desperately needed.

My biggest weakness I have discovered is getting so wrapped up in what I am doing that I don't want to take the time to listen. This is particularly true with my family. Until I began thinking about

listening a great deal. I was unaware of this fact. I have enjoyed learning to listen to my family. I will work on expanding my listening skills in this area.

Another weakness I have found I have is tuning out when listening becomes difficult. I have made a sincere effort to improve my listening in difficult listening situations and believe I have been somewhat successful. This difficult listening is not always pleasant and rewarding, but it does ultimately contribute to listening growth.

The most enjoyable listening for me is the appreciative type of listening. I want to continue to learn appreciative listening skills. Learning these skills can best be accomplished by willful involvement in many varied appreciative listening experiences.

Now that I have begun listening, I can see that my listening skills will continue to grow in all areas of listening. There is still much improvement to be made.

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